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NBC BRIEFING

23 March 1956

SOVIET DESTRUCTION OF STALIN MYTH

- I. Clearest view of recent events in USSR comes from hard look at known facts, and recent history.
 - A. Fact that, during three years since his death (5 Mar '53) Stalin's position has been undergoing gradual and calculated alterations.
 1. Pattern consisted of playing Lenin up, Stalin down: campaign was rolling by Jan '54 (Lenin's 30th anniversary), when Stalin was described as "continuator of Lenin's cause", rather than independent genius of equal stature.
 2. By time of second anniversary Stalin's death (5 Mar '55), day went by almost unmarked.
 - B. Thus, Stalin myth already well-whittled even before Feb '56 Party Congress. Nonetheless, this occasion--first meeting of Party rank-and-file since Stalin's death--was first when really major, although oblique, blows were publicly struck at remnant of myth.
 1. Without actually naming names, Khrushchev made smiling comment on agreeable restoration of the norms of Party life elaborated by Lenin, which have previously been often violated.

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3.

8 Name of Stalingrad should be changed; Stalinallee in Berlin and all places bearing his name; his body removed from mausoleum next to Lenin, statues and other mementoes destroyed.

9 Beria liquidated by Khrushchev-Malenkov collective leadership without even type of trial which Stalin allowed ~~Tukhachevsky~~ ^{show} ~~and other "alleged traitors."~~ ^{may purge} - ~~Bukharin~~

10 ~~Seven years in under Stalin's oppression. Khrushchev's Deluge in~~
~~By the way~~. Finally, if freedom to criticize to be restored in Soviet Union, who will cast first stone at present collective dictatorship?

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2. Nikoyan, plugging principle of collective leadership, also slipped in anonymous knife: "...we must emphasize this old truth because in the course of about 20 years, we in fact had no collective leadership."

C. Not until 10 March, however, (French Embassy reception) did Amb. Bohlen first catch wind of then two-week old event which underlies present excitement.

1. At reception, two different sources (one the London Daily Worker correspondent, the other unidentified by Bohlen) told him of secret closed session of 20th Party Congress, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
where Khrushchev had spoken for two to three hours," giving chapter and verse on Stalin's "crimes." According these sources:

2. Khrushchev, who burst into tears three times during speech, charged that Stalin decimated party, executed many of outstanding leaders without cause, and (following purge of Tukhachevsky) murdered the 5,000 best officers in armed forces.

- 2 -

3. Said that, at one time, when any important Communist summoned to Stalin's presence, he first took farewell of his family. Said torture was used to extract confessions: those who confessed were promised "dachas," but in fact received "dachas underground."
 4. Said Stalin had disregarded repeated warnings, including some from Churchill, of imminent Nazi attack and, as result, USSR had barely escaped catastrophic defeat.
 5. Said all these "facts" justified attitude of present leadership toward Stalin and that statues and other signs glorification Stalin to be progressively eliminated.
- D. Bohlen commented that, while tale obviously losing nothing in its telling, highly probable some such "secret" speech actually made.
- E. Bohlen also stated Party officials throughout USSR rumored to be in receipt substance of "secret" speech, but that nothing had appeared in Soviet press by 12 Mar., and Soviet censors not passing foreign journalists' stories on subject.

II. Within few days of Bohlen report, world press was having heyday with "secret speech" story--and now we leave realm of established fact.

A. Typical press treatment was 15 March Reuters version which had Khrushchev accusing Stalin of:

1. '36 removal (followed by execution) of NKVD head Yagoda, his replacement by Yezhov, and after '37 "purges," liquidation of Yezhov himself.
2. Liquidation, a decade later, of N. Voznesensky, Politburo economist, whose disappearance surprised his own Politburo colleagues.
3. Insults and threats to Mme. Lenin (Krupskaya) including declaration that if widow kept up public criticism of him, he would issue declaration she had never been Lenin's wife, put "someone else" in her place.
4. At start of June '40, German attacks Stalin attributed them to "indiscipline" on part of certain Hitler units, ordered Soviet troops not to return fire. Later, when Germans reached outskirts of Moscow, Stalin--who had been directing operations "from a school globe, without really knowing what a proper map was"--cravenly fled the city, lamenting "we have lost everything that Lenin created."

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5. In postwar atmosphere of "fear and terror" under Stalin, Bulganin feared prison, Voroshilov was suspected as UK agent, Molotov was put under house-arrest.
6. Khrushchev added that Stalin had been a violent nationalist, anti-Semitic (and engineer of "Doctors' Plot"), and responsible for torture even of children during "purges", and that this revelation of the true Stalin could be "spread to the people either suddenly or gradually, and I think it would be more correct to do it gradually." Asked from floor, "how did you stand it? Why didn't you kill him?", Khrushchev replied: "What could we do? There was a reign of terror. You just had to look at him wrongly, and the next day you lost your head."

III. Next mixture of fact and press embroidery to arise was over early March disorders in Georgia.

- A. Known facts are these, from 15 March Embassy Moscow report: A Scandinavian diplomatic dependent, recently returned to Moscow from trip, had eyewitnessed "noisy demonstrations" in front Tiflis Gov't. building 7 Mar. Later, while traveled by train

from Sochi to Moscow, she was recipient of remarks by "agitated" Soviet lady fellow-passenger.

1. Passenger related that "extremely brutal" police had fired "breast-high" on out-of-hand 8 Mar. Tiflis student demonstration, and that her son, among demonstrators, escaped injury only by throwing self on ground before machine-gunning began.

B. We also know as fact that 3rd anniversary of Stalin's death (5 Mar '56) had gone unremarked throughout USSR, but that on 9 Mar. the Georgian Party paper, "Dawn of the East," front-paged big picture of Stalin and Lenin, plus editorial calling hometown boy "the outstanding pupil of great Lenin."

C. Also have fact of admission by ex-premier Malenkov, visiting in London, that, although British press reports exaggerated, "there had been demonstrations" in Tiflis.

IV. World press had second heyday on Georgia story.

A. Reuters reported (from Vienna, 17 Mar.) that "hundreds of thousands of angered demonstrators in Stalin's native Georgia" on 8 Mar. had demanded dismissal of USSR's present leaders "for making accusations against late Premier," and that police refused to intervene, troops ordered not to fire.

- V. No question but that press accounts of Georgia disturbances both exaggerated and demonstrably inaccurate. However, returning to hard facts, we do know that variety of people in USSR have reacted strongly to Khrushchev's "secret" speech. Among facts are:
- A. TASS report (18 March) of "explanatory" speeches by Nikoyan and fellow-Presidium member Pervukhin to mass rallies of workers at two of Moscow's largest factories.
 - B. Embassy Moscow report (20 Mar) that current "party line" on Stalin being given full treatment at series meetings party "activists," and general outline Khrushchev "secret" speech widely known among non-party circles Moscow.
 - C. Typical reaction one such non-party source (Moscow scenario writer) reported as shock, together with feeling that, while he had been no lover Stalin's policies, "something great I believed in has died. Scenarist further commented: "it took courage for our leaders to admit they were afraid."
 - D. Embassy also reports that, as late as 20 Mar, Soviet domestic press still not criticizing Stalin by name, and domestic reprints of foreign Communist attacks on Stalin (Rakosi, Ulbricht and Togliatti)

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continue to delete direct references and merely note that speakers condemned "personality cult."

VI. Interesting evidence Soviet uncertainty over this hot issue is fact that censors have passed both 19 Mar. AFP statement that "secret" Khrushchev speech actually was made, and 17 Mar. NY Times dispatch from Murmansk which underlined shock, puzzlement and dismay of arctic man-in-street over Moscow's "reassessment Stalin."

- A. Declaring flatly "party workers are explaining things," Times story quotes Murmansk resident as saying "it is no easy thing to make corrections in the policy of personal cultism that has prevailed for so long and under which so many of our youth grow up."
- B. Times story also quotes young Komsomol as saying in response to some of new statements on Stalin: "ridiculous! Stalin was wonderful. Stalin and Lenin, they are two of the same. When you say Lenin, you can also say Stalin."
- C. Meanwhile, apparently indifferent to internal reaction, leadership is continuing debunking campaign. Have these further facts:

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1. Tretyakov Gallery (Soviet "national museum")--which once overwhelmed with Stalin pictures and statues--now contains only one small bust of former dictator.
2. Stalin statues also disappearing from other sections Moscow.
3. Rewrite of Party History already in progress.

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NSC BRIEFING - 22 March 1956

Attempt to destroy Stalin tradition presents grave problems
for Soviet Union and real opportunity for Western World

25X1X4

attack

2. If Stalin degraded then Mao takes his place along side of Lenin.
3. For 25 years Stalin not only Soviet dictator but also leading theoretician and great war hero. They, therefore, have three-

fold task of destruction:

Here problems & questions

- a) Tens of millions of copies of his works are scattered throughout the Soviet Union, Stalin on Leninism, Short History of Communist Party, etc., etc. Can they remove and burn these?
- b) Every history book filled with Stalin eulogies. Also Encyclopaedia Britannica (refer to Beria.) -
- c) If Stalin a gangster, what is position of other members of the gang? *Molotov* worked with him for 40 years; Khrushchev held key job under him for 18 years; Bulganin, 21; Mikoyan, 30; Kaganovich 28 and *Molotov* personal secretary and kept his black book for 27 years.

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4. Who will really believe in collective leadership. Stalin ran through a series of collective leaderships:
(Stalin-Zinoviev-Kameney vs. Trotsky 1924-25); (Stalin-Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky vs. Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kameney 1925-27); (Stalin-Molotov-Voroshilov-Mikoyan vs. Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky 1927-29).
5. Stalin was artisan of Soviet foreign policy for 25 years. ~~at~~ *are* these ^{to} ~~should~~ now be repudiated. Example: Korea, Berlin, Rejection of Marshall Plan, etc. And do Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam agreements still stand?
6. Stalin real artisan of communisation of European satellites. What will leadership in those satellites now do? Bierut leadership Polish Communism Party "died" in Moscow. ~~for~~ *after Congress* Rakosi must be trembling in Hungary and same true other satellite leaders to whom degradation Stalin incomprehensible. Trotsky memories should now be disinterred; his murder by Stalin admitted.
7. How can Soviet people tell a Georgian dictatorship from a Ukrainian dictatorship under Khrushchev? If Stalin is as bad as they say, should not Army move in and liquidate his long time henchmen who still run government? Should not all of

Stalin's appointments throughout Soviet Union be reviewed and replaced?